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GUIDE FOR COMPETITIVE PROMOTION PANELS

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPETITIVE PROMOTION PROGRAM

High esprit de corps of Agency Personnel depends to a considerable degree upon the achievement of a fair and effective promotion system which will earn and retain the respect of all members of the Agency. The Agency has adopted the competitive evaluation promotion policy with the aim of ensuring maximum equity, objectivity, and impartiality in promotions. This program is based to some extent upon characteristics of the various promotion systems in the Foreign Service Corps of the Department of State, private business, and the Military Services, but is specifically designed to meet Agency objectives of building and maintaining a Career Staff of high caliber. Its chief characteristics are:

A. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT:

Appraisal of the employee's value to the Agency in terms of the quantity and quality of the work he has performed; his conduct, skills and personality; and his potential for future assignments. A conscientious effort is made to record, by means of the Biographic Profile and Fitness Report, complete, factual, and objective information regarding each individual.

B. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVANCEMENT WITHIN A CAREER SERVICE:

Every employee eligible for promotion is evaluated (1) annually, (2) in comparison with every other member of his Career Service who is in the same grade and occupational category, and (3) in the case of personnel in grades GS-7 through GS-14, by an impartial Competitive Evaluation Panel. This system differs from the usual civil service practice where promotion depends rigidly upon the grade of the job to which the individual is assigned.

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C. GROUP JUDGMENT:

The relative standing of the person rated depends on group judgment. The Fitness Report contains the opinions of individual supervisors and reviewing officers; the annual competitive rating represents the consensus of a group of experienced senior members of the employee's Career Service with respect to the employee's merit for promotion in comparison with his contemporaries. The objective is to make the promotion system genuinely free from favoritism and bias.

D. SUFFICIENT SERVICE IN GRADE TO PROVIDE A BASIS FOR EVALUATION:

The promotion system requires that personnel serve long enough in each grade to provide a basis for a thorough evaluation of their performance at the grade level. This is accomplished by establishing minimum periods of service in each grade during which personnel are not in the zone of consideration for promotion.

E. RECOGNITION OF MERIT BY ADVANCEMENT:

In each grade, the normal practice will be to promote those who are ranked highest by the Competitive Evaluation Panel, provided their qualifications can be utilized to advantage at the next higher grade level. In other words, the available promotions will go to those found by the panels and Heads of Career Service to be the most competent and valuable to CIA.

II. THE COMPETITIVE PROMOTION PROCESS

A. FUNCTION AND COMPOSITION OF COMPETITIVE EVALUATION PANELS:

Panel Competitive Evaluation of all eligible employees on the basis of their performance, qualifications, acceptance of Career Staff obligations, length of service, and value to the Agency is the most critical element in the selection of personnel for promotion. The product of panel action will consist of a list of employees ranked in order of merit for promotion for the use of the Head of the Career Service in making final promotion recommendations. The list will include the employees the panel considers at the time of panel action to merit promotion within the numerical limitation which may be prescribed by the Head of the Career Service. Panels will be

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comprised of a minimum of three members of the Career Service concerned, senior in grade to employees being evaluated, and appointed by the Head of the Career Service to serve for the period required to evaluate all eligible employees in the grade groups and competitive promotion area(s) assigned.

B. INFORMATION USED BY PANELS IN EVALUATING EMPLOYEES:

1. Listing of all personnel in the zone of consideration for promotion in the grade level to be evaluated.
2. Listing of personnel recommended for promotion (in order of preference whenever practical) by Senior Supervisors.
3. An indication from the Head of the Career Service, if he desires, of the number of personnel to be on the panel's rank order list. (The Head of the Career Service may predetermine the approximate maximum number of promotions to be made at each grade level on the basis of guidelines, such as past promotion practice and the status of staffing of the Career Service. Rather than reveal the maximum figures, he may direct the panel to provide a rank order listing for each grade level which will contain a somewhat larger number of names. This will provide for the likelihood that some individuals on the panel's rank order listing will not be promoted for the reason that their qualifications are not utilized currently at the higher grade and the use of a personal rank assignment is not considered appropriate.)
4. Form No. 1080, Biographic Profile (Figure 1), or an equivalent summary of service and performance of each employee in the zone of consideration. The Official Personnel Folder is also available to the panel if needed.
5. Personal interview, whenever feasible, of employees, their supervisors, or others having knowledge of the employees being evaluated. The importance of interviews of persons in grades GS-12 and above particularly is stressed.

C. SIGNIFICANT FACTORS FOR PANEL CONSIDERATION IN EVALUATING EMPLOYEES:

1. Performance (Productivity, Quality, and Level of Job Performed)

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- a. One of the chief considerations in competitively evaluating employees is the performance factor, i. e. , how well the job has been performed and the quality and quantity of work done. In the interest of rendering maximum equity in judging this factor, panel members should bear in mind the level of the job performed by employees they evaluate. Otherwise, it may happen that an employee performing work of a lower level than his current grade will perform exceptionally well and be rated unduly high, whereas an employee performing work of a higher level than his current grade may be rated too low. Thus, Fitness Reports and comparable ratings become more meaningful when considered in relation to the characteristics and level of the job performed.
- b. In addition to past and current performance, the potentiality the individual has demonstrated for the performance of more difficult and responsible duties in the future is very important. Fitness Report ratings on this factor and records of performance of assignments of higher grade level should be considered carefully.
- c. A common criticism of promotion panel systems is that they tend to make employees reluctant to take initiative, but instead individuals may be inclined to conform entirely to prevailing opinion. Since this tendency would jeopardize the merit system and the effectiveness of the Agency staff, every effort must be made to give due credit to employees who have shown themselves capable of sound independent judgment, creative work, self-reliance, and the acceptance of unusual responsibility. If the initiative of an employee has led to some difficulty, he should not be severely judged because a calculated risk did not work out if the attempted line of action was worthwhile. Similarly, panel members should be wary of employees who restrict their output in order to concentrate on a few work products for the purpose of receiving special commendations.
- d. Extra care should be taken to determine the merit for promotion of employees whose duties give them opportunity for comparatively little substantive output which can be

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readily evaluated, or whose duties and performance cannot, for security reasons, be completely documented. Similarly, employees engaged in training assignments must be given full consideration for their efforts in the light of their reported accomplishments during such training.

- e. In evaluating the performance of employees performing executive or supervisory duties, it is stressed that principal consideration should be given to the demonstration of management skills. Of importance are the demonstrated abilities of an executive or supervisor to plan and organize his unit, establish sound policies, train and supervise employees, achieve efficient operation, and accomplish the required objectives.

2. Acceptance of Career Staff Obligations

A factor which should be given considerable weight is the willingness of the employee to meet his Career Staff obligations. This may be exemplified by acceptance of assignments to isolated or hardship posts, undertaking of specialized training which may lead to protracted periods of service in difficult or unpleasant areas of the world and, in general, by a demonstrated willingness to put the needs of the Agency before personal preference or convenience.

3. Value of Employee to Agency

Developing and retaining the required number of qualified personnel in all lines of work are problems which all Career Services must face. The major objectives of the Agency Career Program include providing Career Staff Members with a broader base of training and experience to increase their versatility and assignment potential as well as developing employees in highly specialized fields. In competitively evaluating employees for promotion, consideration should be given to the present value of the employee to the Agency, as well as his potential usefulness. Of pertinence to the value of an employee to the Agency is a consideration of possession of scarce occupational skills and experience which are difficult to replace and which may have required arduous training or unpleasant assignments for their acquisition.

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4. Length of Service

Length of service in a grade level (beyond the minimum time requirement) shall be a factor in the evaluation of an employee's record in that promotion must be earned by meritorious performance over a period of time sufficient for appraisal. Agency experience at lower grade levels as well as experience gained prior to entry into CIA should be evaluated on the basis of their applicability to an Agency career. Notwithstanding the usual length of service requirements, it is important to keep in mind that no employee should be rated lower than his performance merits simply because of the recency of his last promotion. To do so might penalize unusual efforts and talents as well as enhance the chances for promotion of those whose principal claim is that of seniority.

5. Qualifications (Education, Experience, Training, Personal Characteristics)

The degree to which an employee exceeds the minimum standards of experience, training, and education is significant to his evaluation, providing the experience, training, and education is of demonstrated usefulness in connection with the employee's work and probable future utilization. Personal characteristics should similarly be evaluated in terms of their application to current and probable future assignments.

6. Other Considerations

- a. Panels must ensure that individuals currently on assignments overseas or otherwise outside headquarters are given equal consideration for promotion and are not penalized by their nonavailability for interview nor by the problems of current documentation of performance.
- b. In evaluating employees whose records reflect adverse reports or criticisms, care should be taken to determine whether the adverse material has been out-dated by more recent favorable performance. Giving undue weight to past reports of defects which an employee has corrected may create an unjust permanent handicap to his career. Thus, panels must be as sensitive to records reflecting improved performance as they are to those which reflect deterioration.

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- c. Panel members' personal knowledge of an individual should not be given undue weight. However, if a panel member, through personal experience or otherwise, is cognizant of pertinent information not in the records, he shall make that information available to the panel for investigation and consideration. A panel member should disqualify himself from ranking any candidate whom he may feel he cannot objectively evaluate due to close association or strong personal feelings.
- d. Whenever competitive evaluation establishes employees' ratings as essentially equal, it is appropriate that panel members give added weight to consideration of age, length of qualifying experience, and general background.

D. SUGGESTED STEPS IN COMPETITIVE RANKING BY PANELS:

1. Names of all eligible employees recommended for promotion by Senior Supervisors will be provided to the panel by the Head of the Career Service.
2. The records (Biographic Profile or equivalent) of the above employees will be preliminarily reviewed by panel members for familiarization.
3. The records (Biographic Profile or equivalent) of all other eligible employees in the competitive promotion area will be reviewed. From this group, the names of any other employees considered by the panel to warrant final ranking for promotion will be selected.
4. The names of employees recommended for promotion by Senior Supervisors together with the names of other eligibles selected by the panel will be considered for panel ranking. Whenever feasible, interviews will be conducted with these employees, their supervisors, and others having knowledge of their work. This step is particularly desirable in the consideration of employees in grades GS-12 and above.
5. Each panel member will individually rank all employees (selected as above) after completion of the review of Biographic Profiles or equivalent summary of service and performance, and the completion of panel discussions or interviews.

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6. Upon review of the individual rankings, any wide discrepancies in panel member rankings on any employee will be discussed and more information obtained if necessary. Thereafter, panel members may adjust their individual rankings.
7. The final ranking list will be computed as a composite of individual rankings with equal weight being given to each panel member's judgment. The individual rankings for each employee will be totalled, and the final ranking will be determined by listing the employee with the lowest total of ranking points first, the employee with the second lowest total of ranking points, second, etc. If a panel member disqualified himself on ranking an individual, the rankings of the other members will be given proportionately more weight in the mathematical computation.

EXAMPLE

RANKING ORDER COMPUTATION (EMPLOYEES a, b, c, d, e)

EMPLOYEE RANKING BY PANEL MEMBERS

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Panel Member 1</u>	<u>Panel Member 2</u>	<u>Panel Member 3</u>
1	a	c	a
2	c	b	b
3	e	a	c
4	b	d	e
5	d	e	d

DETERMINATION OF FINAL RANK ORDER OF EMPLOYEES

<u>Final Ranking</u>	<u>Employees</u>	<u>Total Points</u>
1	a	5
2	c	6
3	b	8
4	e	12
5	d	14

8. If the final list exceeds the maximum number of candidates for promotion requested by the Head of the Career Service, the list will be adjusted accordingly and forwarded to the Head of the Career Service for his use.

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III. SUPPORT PROVIDED TO COMPETITIVE EVALUATION PANELS

A. BY OFFICE OF PERSONNEL:

The Office of Personnel will be responsible for the program of preparing accurate Biographic Profiles of personnel to be evaluated. Due to the volume of work involved, participation by Personnel Officers, Career Management Officers, and employees in this program will be necessary. Additionally, the Office of Personnel will provide clarification on promotion procedures, and furnish listings of personnel in the zone of consideration, qualification requirements for specific positions or lines of work, and position evaluation information.

B. BY CAREER MANAGEMENT OFFICERS OF THE CAREER SERVICE:

Important responsibilities of Career Management Officers will be the provision of secretariat support to Competitive Evaluation Panels, the obtaining of information concerning employees being evaluated before or during panel considerations, and serving as a point of liaison between the panel and Senior Supervisors.

C. BY PERSONNEL OFFICERS AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS IN OPERATING OFFICES:

Personnel Officers and Administrative Officers will be responsible for ensuring that lists of personnel recommended for promotion by Senior Supervisors are provided to the panels and will assist Senior Supervisors in this regard. They will participate with the Office of Personnel in developing Biographic Profiles or the equivalent for panel use.